



## One Jump Ahead

*Mark L. Van Name*

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Jon Moore: A nanotech-enhanced warrior who wants nothing more than a quiet life and a way back to his strange home world. Lobo: An AI-enhanced Predator-Class Assault Vehicle, a mobile fortress equipped for any environment from the seabed to interstellar space. TWO WOLVES IN A GALAXY OF LARGER PREDATORS

Jon Moore wanted only to relax on the pristine planet of Macken--but Macken was the secret battleground of two megacorporations, both determined to control the local jump gate and the riches of an undeveloped world. Moore was too valuable a tool not to be used, whether or not he was willing. What the corporations didn't realize was that Moore had a mind of his own and a conscience that wouldn't let him quit until he'd righted the wrong they'd tricked him into making. And Moore had Lobo--or just possibly Lobo had Jon Moore, because this Assault Vehicle had a mind of its own. . . .

Finding allies and enemies among terrorist groups and elite mercenaries, gun-runners and the only kind of government possible on a frontier short on rules and long on riches, Jon and Lobo fight to a climax with a corporate army that can't afford to leave any witnesses. Exotic settings, fast action, real tech, mechanically-enhanced animals--and a beautiful woman who's as deadly as a cobra!

"One Jump Ahead: " the first novel in the Jon & Lobo series

## One Jump Ahead Details

Date : Published June 5th 2007 by Baen Books (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9781416520856

Author : Mark L. Van Name

Format : Hardcover 293 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Space, Space Opera, Fiction



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## From Reader Review One Jump Ahead for online ebook

### Don says

For a first book in a sci fi series this is very good. The characters are believable and entertaining to read about and the action is excellent. The interaction between Jon and his PCAV battle vehicle's AI (Lobo) is great. Probably my favorite part of this book is the future technology that Mark envisions for his worlds. It's a realistic blend of organic and technology, which is probably what the future will end up being more like versus an all metal world. I give 3.5 stars to the story itself and 5 stars to the scientific vision and the world he created. Simply fascinating.

I had a chance to meet Mark earlier this year, he is a business partner of my company and was touring the labs when I was introduced. Really bright guy and friendly as well. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in the Jon and Lobo series, Slanted Jack.

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### Stefan says

Mark L Van's debut novel was a pleasure to reading from the first page to last. It's one of those books that was so fun I read it too quickly and then wished I had savoured the plots twists and turns more carefully. One Jump Ahead was a wonderfully balanced novel that balanced science fiction with thriller and adventure elements. The non-stop action, compelling first-person narrator and a witty AI-controlled combat ship.

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### John says

It's been ages since I read a mass market paperback. I picked this one up because the author was recommended to me by a friend whose opinions I generally trust, and I wasn't disappointed.

It's classic sci-fi adventure with a "lone wolf" protagonist successfully bucking the system using his wits and technological tricks. One of the great problems with these kinds of stories is explaining why the methods of the hero haven't been dealt with.

For example, (possible spoiler here, but it occurs in the first few pages, so I don't consider it a big one) our hero talks with appliances. AI is so commonplace that even your coffeepot comes with it (a fairly logical extension of the prevalence of computer chips today), and they prove to be a great source of information. The problem is, why doesn't everybody do this, and by extension, why doesn't everybody defend against it?

The author's solution is one I found rather clever, but I won't go into details as it would risk introducing more minor spoilers. Suffice it to say that he did come up with a solution that is at least strong enough to allow me to suspend any disbelief I might have otherwise had.

My biggest issue with the book? It's a shame that the front cover blurb is from Orson Scott Card, it almost caused me to put it back on the shelf. I'm glad I didn't.

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## **Jeffrey says**

A light science-fiction read with some interesting ideas. There are a few light moments with the main character giving personalities to different futuristic appliances, but overall, it reads as a science fiction/military adventure with the main character prepping adventurous plans to perform espionage in a futuristic setting.

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## **Debrac2014 says**

I really liked the characters and story line! I wonder if Jon's going back to Pinkelponker to find Jennie!

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## **Kelly says**

‘One Jump Ahead’ is Van Name’s first novel and it’s a heck of a debut. I read this book in a quick couple of sittings, ignoring other distractions (even The Sims 3 – which anyone who knows me can tell you is one mean feat!) until I finished it.

‘One Jump Ahead’ is the where not only where we meet Jon Moore and Lobo, but they meet each other. Jon Moore has a colourful and distinctive past as a mercenary soldier and private courier. But before that time he was a test subject in a secret nano-technology experiment. Lobo is a heavily armored and armed PCAV (Predator-class assault vehicle) with an emotive AI and biting wit. They work well together and it’s their partnership that makes this novel (and subsequent novels) so enjoyable.

Jon receives Lobo as payment for a search and rescue operation. Lobo needs some replacement parts and upon recommendation of a client, Jon contacts an arms dealer to secure those parts. This is when the trouble really begins. The arms dealer tries to rip him off, and suddenly there’s a bounty on his head. Somehow, this all has something to do with the girl he rescued. You’ll need to read the rest of ‘One Jump Ahead’ to find out how. It’s a great adventure!

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## **Nancy says**

I read an excerpt of Jon & Lobo #5, No Going Back, before I read this and I feel like it really gave me a leg up on the universe. If I hadn't read the excerpt first the learning curve on various things - Lobo, Jon's nanomachines, talking to electronics - would have been a lot steeper. I imagine I would have been a lot more confused and therefore enjoyed it less.

However, I enjoyed it just fine. Fast-paced, SF action adventure that for the most part was a fun read. I loved Lobo. And the talking electronics. Two things kept it from being five stars. One, Jon is not a happy person most of the time. That really wears on me personally as a reader. Lobo counteracts that a bit but I feel Jon needs just a wee bit of a kick in the personality department. On the other hand, Jon is one of those super smart, super capable, super competent characters able to get himself out of most sticky situations in one piece, and I have a soft spot for that kind of character. It's like any one of Dick Francis's heroes, but in space!

And two, I noticed that most of the characters in the book were male. Even the background characters - aides, shop keepers, sales people - almost all men, or a gender neutral of some kind. That irritated me a bit.

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### **Adam says**

So far, this is a pretty good sci-fi novel. Author Mark L. Van Name mixes semi-hard sci-fi with quirky comedy to create a novel that is better than the sum of its parts.

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### **Cathy says**

A very fun, fast-pace, sci-fi adventure with a bit of a heist feeling. There's also a bit of military, a bit of technology, some humor, but not too much of anything. It has a great slightly old-fashioned feeling, like some of the anti-hero stories from the '60s and '70s. And Lobo is a great side-kick.

This was an accidental re-read. I originally read this before I discovered Goodreads and planned to read the sequels, but never remembered to look for them. Knowing when the next book in a series I'm following comes out is what led me to Goodreads, so finding this is an nice example of things coming full circle. Now I can move on to book two with an extra happy heart.

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### **Stephanie says**

**Précis** A former mercenary is bio-engineered with outlawed nanotechnology and is the only known survivor of the ill-fated Aggro experiments. He teams up with an intelligent armored vehicle named Lobo and they get caught up in a corporate battle for control of the jump gate aperture near the developing colony world called Macken.

During the ongoing adventure he meets an old friend from his mercenary days, has to work with SAW - the organization he worked for before Aggro - and botches a kidnapping rescue. In the end he gets it right and makes a harrowing escape relying on the mysterious gate aperture and its dislike of violence.

Protagonist Jon Moore

Antagonist Ron Slake

What I liked I liked the interesting use of technology, because of Moore's bioengineering, he can converse with all the intelligent machines, even mundane ones like drink dispensers. The portrayal of them as gossipy creatures works well. I also liked the love/hate relationship with Lobo and its maturity and the end. The characters are well-developed and the plot moves briskly toward an exciting conclusion. The way he makes his escape was clever and unseen.

What I didn't like I would like to see more of Lobo's character revealed. I also wanted to know more about the Aggro experiments.

**Final Comments** This is Van Name's first novel and it is a great first effort. It was very readable (I knocked it off in three days) and his style is just different enough from the Ringo and Weber style to be his own. I couldn't help but think that Van Name is a fan of the Bolo books by Keith Laumer. The PCAV is very much

like the Bolo vehicle; intelligent, well armed and a great machine to have around when the brown stuff hits the fan. Even the name is an anagram. I also liked the mystery of the jump gate apertures, they are not manmade and no one knows exactly where they come from.

The sequel to this book is due out in July 2008 and while I probably will wait to get the paperback, I definitely have added Van Name to my list of authors I want to keep reading. I hope that in the sequel we get to know more about Jon's background and get to know Lobo better.

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### **Susan says**

this was extremely OK, but I could feel my eyes glaze over with some of the internal monologue

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### **Dirk Grobbelaar says**

I'll start off by saying that the author handles Lobo with admirable restraint. Let's face it, there is a **lot** of potential for unprecedented mayhem here. Instead, there is a lot of tactical, and even strategic, plotting involved and the story focuses mainly on Jon Moore in this first novel. This is perhaps the best route to take, but I'm hoping the subsequent novels will see Lobo fully unleashed.

As far as Science Fiction adventures are concerned, *One Jump Ahead* has one or two tricks up its sleeve that differentiates it from the pack. The leading character, apart from being a nano-enhanced super soldier (nothing new there), can also talk to machines. Machines? Erm? It's not as daft as it sounds; it's actually handled quite expertly in a quaint bling-tech kind of way. Considering that the story takes place in the far future, the typical household appliance described here isn't remotely identifiable with whatever is occupying your kitchen at the moment, and that obviously helps. It has to do with frequencies, artificial intelligence and other science-y stuff. Despite the fact that Jon Moore is *different*, he certainly isn't invincible, and pains are taken to emphasise this. He sometimes needs help, and he is sometimes vulnerable. There are also many secrets in his past, some of which remain shrouded in mystery. Everything seems to indicate that this will be explored further in the sequels to *One Jump Ahead* so there is a lot to look forward to.

Our super-soldier also has a sidekick (Lobo), who just happens to be a Predator Class Assault Vehicle. Sounds cool, doesn't it? And it is too. There isn't much more to be said on this point, it's the series' signature. The book wasn't as pulpy as I'd expected it to be, and it has a lot to do with the fact that the author doesn't get too carried away with his creations. Like I've already mentioned: admirable.

So, buckets of attitude and old school fun still gets you places. The underwater sequence alone (with a racing Ray named Bob) is worth the price of admission. Fans of David Drake, David Weber and the like should check this out.

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### **Mary JL says**

Yes, more military-actions SF. Those of you who read my reviews know it is a favorite type of SF for me.

The story basically introduces two partners. One is Jon Moore, former soldier--enhanced with nanotechnology which gives him special abilities. The other "partner" is Lobo--a sentient AI (artificial intelligence) who is installed in the controls of a Predator-Class Assault vehicle.

Basically, it is a military SF tale with Jon and Lobo Vs. the villains.

Yes, there have been similar tales but this is a good take on an SF standard.

One thing I like is Jon Moore does not WANT to stomp the bad guys. But he has to make a living and military skills are the only skills he knows. He's also anxious not to show his "enhanced" powers for fear of wind up a human guinea pig in some secret government or corporate lab.

And for a computer AI, Lobo is a pretty neat 'character'.

So action, humor, decent characterization and an acceptable plot makes this a fast, fun and easy read for SF/Action/Adventure fans. Recommended for any SF or adventure fan.

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### **Aspen Junge says**

I was trying to figure out why I wasn't really connecting with the characters. The plot was fine, action driven. The characters had histories. The author is good with description, if he has a tendency to overexplain a little. Then I realized; I have no idea what Jon, the viewpoint character, is feeling. Since the book is written in first person, this lack is downright creepy.

He's got a tragic past. He's an action hero. He saves the girl right off. He makes a new best friend. And I have no idea how he feels about any of this. When he returns the girl to her father, is he worried? Triumphant? Satisfied at a job well done? He acquires a combat shuttle capable of performing in environments from hard vacuum to deep ocean and with a sentient A.I., and I don't know if he likes Lobo or not. Or what he plans to do with it. Is it a friend? Is it a tool? How does he feel about his tragic past? Wistful? Seeking revenge? Has he put it behind him or does it haunt his every waking moment? What motivates the guy? How can I cheer him to his goals if I have no idea what they are?

He doesn't bounce on his toes in anticipation. There is no sick dropping feeling of dread in his stomach. No grin steals across his face like a thief in the night. He doesn't stare at the bulkhead, brooding over his wrongs which happened to him oh so many years ago. It's a completely flat affect.

The author mentions several times that Lobo's A.I. has emotion subroutines. Jon is more robotic than Lobo.

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### **Dan says**

I love this series. Can't get enough of it. The interaction between the main characters, the situations they find themselves in, and manage to extricate themselves from. Superb. And, hey, you have to love a place called "Pickelponker"! 7/7/17 re-read.

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